

**State Board of Education
March 17, 2009
Item L**

Team: Presenter - Vermont Secretary of State Deb Markowitz

Discussion Topic: 2007 Civics Education Survey Results

Background Information:

In the spring of 2007, in partnership with the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, the Vermont Secretary of State's Office surveyed the entire Vermont senior class. Nearly every public and private school student participated. The questions were designed to provide information about whether exposure to the political process through mock election programs and other civic education opportunities affects students' attitudes and behaviors. The survey gives us a great snapshot of our youngest citizens and tells us how civics education can make a real difference.

Purpose of Discussion:

To share data with the board that shows the importance of civics education generally, and in specific, mock election programs, for instilling in our youth the values, attitudes and behaviors necessary for them to become active, civically engaged adults.

It is my hope that that board will support the Secretary of State's office's continued efforts in this arena and will encourage the Department of Education to continue to partner with the office in the development and implementation of a comprehensive program of civics education.

Cost Implications:

Monetary Resources – N/A

Staff Resources – The social studies coordinator for the Department of Education provides technical assistance to the Secretary of State's office as new civics materials are developed and disseminated. This employee is an important and active member of the Vermont Civics Council.

Staff Available: Sigrid Lumbra, DOE Social Studies Coordinator

The Impact of Civics Education on the Attitudes, Behaviors and Disposition of Vermont's Youth



**Vermont Office of the
Secretary of State**

There can be no higher priority than to cultivate our next generation of citizens and leaders.



In 1998 fewer than one in five young people between the ages of 18 and 24 voted.

In response to the lagging participation of young people, in 1998 the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) commissioned a study of youth attitudes on politics, citizenship, government & voting.

The NASS study, The New Millennium Project, looked at the reasons young people ages 18-24 had been dropping out of the electoral process.

New Millennium Survey 

Some of the New Millennium Study findings:

- At the time, American youth had only a limited, vague understanding of what it meant to be a citizen in a democratic society. They suffered an information and skill deficit about politics and the process of voting.
- The study pointed to the failure of schools and parents to teach children the mechanics of democracy and the importance of taking part in the political process.

VERMONT VOTES FOR KIDS

In response to the findings of the New Millennium Study, Secretary of State Deb Markowitz launched Vermont Votes for Kids for the 2000 election.

Vermont Votes for Kids is a mock election program that provides children, from kindergarten through high school, with the information and skills necessary to make them full participants in our democracy.

Vermont Votes for Kids is a voluntary program. Schools are encouraged to participate but are not required to do so.

The Vermont Votes for Kids program provides an experiential learning program for kindergarten through high school that culminates in a mock election in school or at the polling place.

The logo for Vermont Votes for Kids features the text "VERMONT VOTES FOR KIDS" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. Each letter is filled with a red and white horizontal striped pattern, reminiscent of the Vermont state flag. The text is set against a light blue background with a yellow and orange border on the left and right sides.

VERMONT VOTES FOR KIDS

Vermont Votes for Kids Provides Educators with Easy to Use Materials.

Kindergarten
through 4th
grade



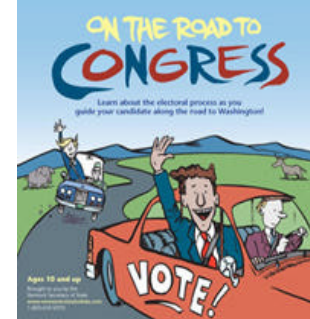
5th through
8th grade



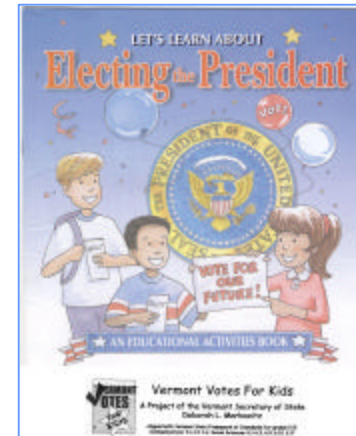
9th through
12th grade



Statewide
newspaper
series



Educational
game for
grades 6 – 8



Educational
activity book
for grades
2-5

The Secretary of State's Office Provides Free Mock Election and New Voter Resources

Vermont Votes for Kids

Mock Ballot

For Governor of Vermont, I vote for:

- ☐ Jim Douglas, Republican
- ☐ Scudder Parker, Democrat

For U.S. Senator, I vote for:

- ☐ Bernie Sanders, Independent
- ☐ Richard Tarrant, Republican

For U.S. Congress, I vote for:

- ☐ Martha Rainville, Republican
- ☐ Peter Welch, Democrat

Should students be allowed to chew gum in school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Should students have to wear uniforms in school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Thank You for Voting!

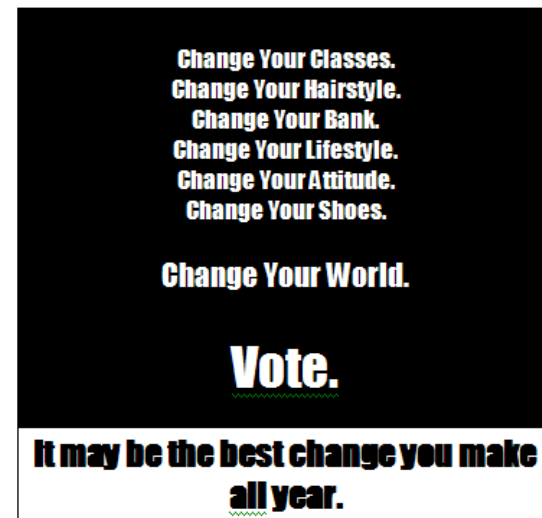
Simplified ballots for younger students, and the real ballot for older students for use in their mock elections.



**How-to-vote
DVD designed
for high school
students.**



**Free materials to
make the mock
election fun!**

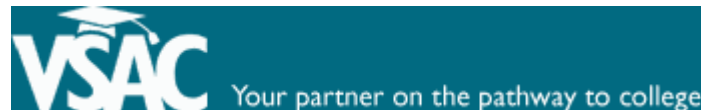


**Materials for high
school voter registration
drives.**

Hundreds of schools and tens of thousands of school children participate in the Vermont Votes for Kids mock election program every election year.

By 2007 most Vermont high school seniors had participated in a mock election at some point during their school career.

In partnership with VSAC, the Secretary of State's Office undertook a study of these students to see what impact the mock election experience had on their civic attitudes, behaviors and dispositions.



THE VSAC SENIOR SURVEY

In 2007 the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation surveyed every high school senior in Vermont.* This survey included a number of questions designed to measure the success of the Secretary of State's Office's mock election program and to help us understand how our young people think about government, politics and their responsibility to be active citizens.

* Students who were not in school on the day of the survey did not participate.

The Questions

Civic Engagement

25. I have participated in a mock election:

(Please mark all that apply.)

- ☐ In elementary school (1)
- ☐ In middle or junior high school (2)
- ☐ In high school (3)
- ☐ At a polling place (4)
- ☐ None of the above (5)

26. I have: (Please mark all that apply.)

- ☐ Been at a polling place with a parent (1)
- ☐ Met an elected official (2)
- ☐ Researched candidates' qualifications for political office (3)
- ☐ None of the above (4)

● **Listed below are several types of actions that you could take over the next few years. What do you expect that you will do?**

I will certainly not do this
I will probably not do this
I will probably do this
I will certainly do this

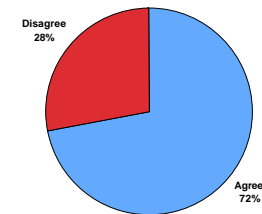
- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 38. Vote for President | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 39. Vote in a state election | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 40. Work on a political campaign | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 41. Volunteer time to help people in the community | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 42. Collect money for a social cause | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 43. Collect signatures for a petition | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

● **Please rate how strongly you agree with each of the statements below. (1 = Very strongly agree and 6 = Very strongly disagree.)**

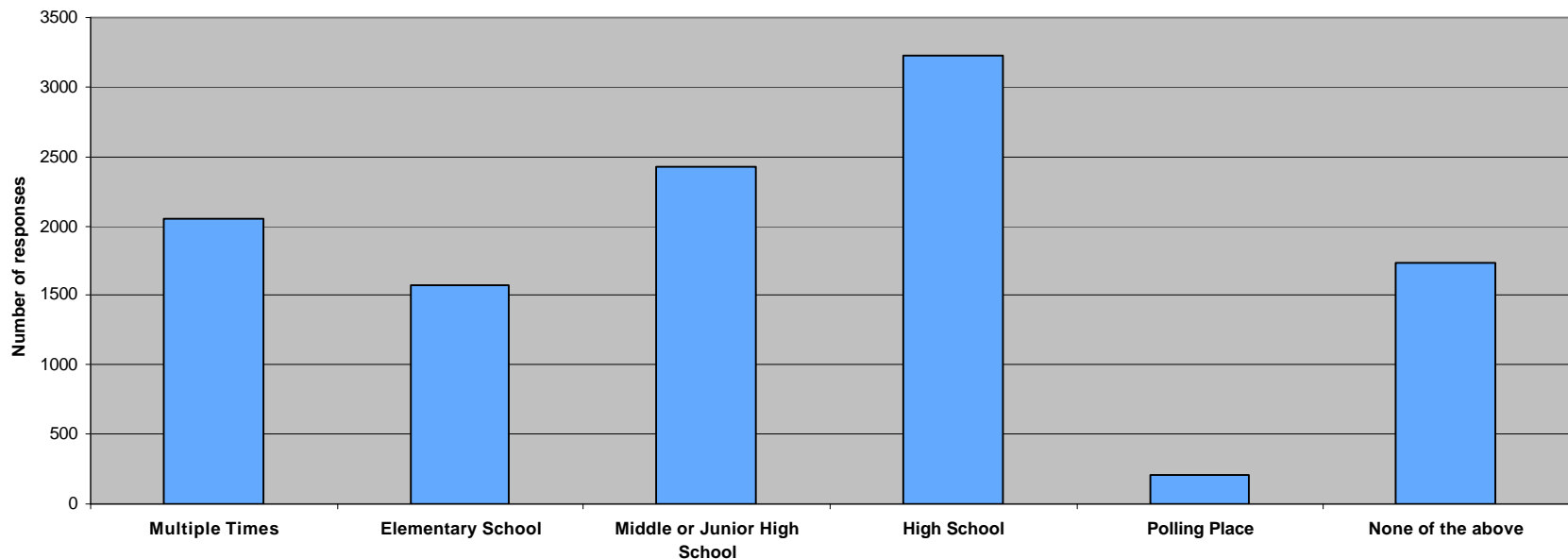
- | | Strongly agree | | | | | Strongly disagree |
|--|----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------------------|
| 27. My education has helped me understand the political issues facing the country | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| 28. When political issues are being discussed I usually have something to say | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| 29. I think I am better informed about politics and the government than most students | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| 30. My school could do more to teach us about the political issues facing the country | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| 31. I have learned basic information about how our elections work | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| 32. I know how to research candidates for political office | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| 33. I have learned how to examine social problems | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| 34. I have learned ways of addressing community problems | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| 35. I have learned how political action by groups can solve social problems | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| 36. I have learned about individuals' responsibility to their community | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| 37. I think students my age are well informed about politics and government | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |

The VSAC survey showed that 72% of the seniors remember participating in at least one mock election over the course of their school careers.

I have participated in a mock election.

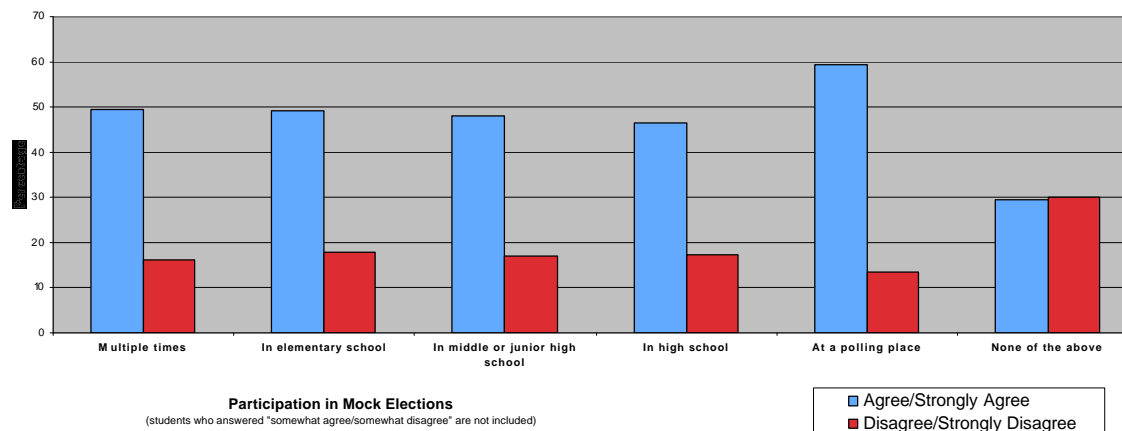


I have participated in a mock election.

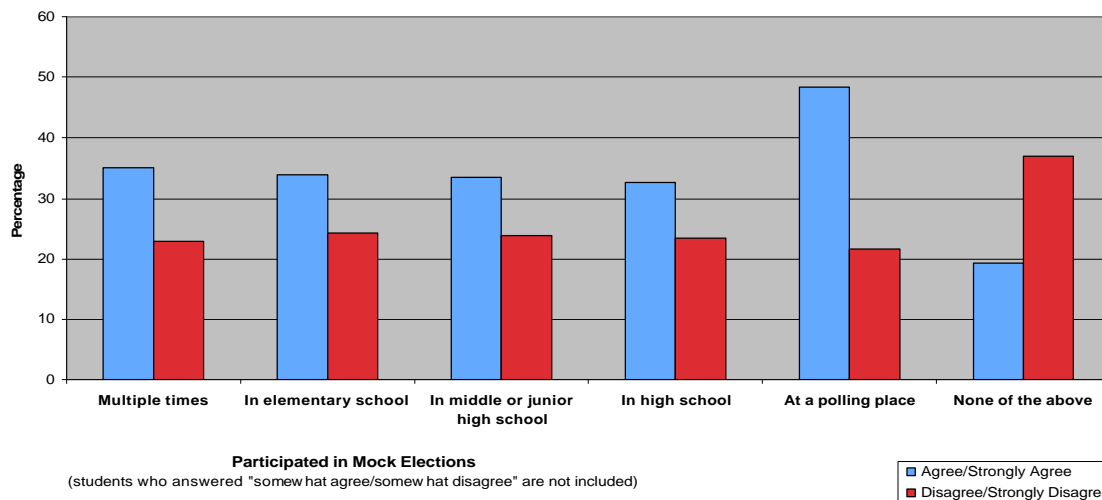


The survey suggested that participating in a mock election made a meaningful difference in the way students relate to politics and government. Students who participated in a mock election were much more likely to say:

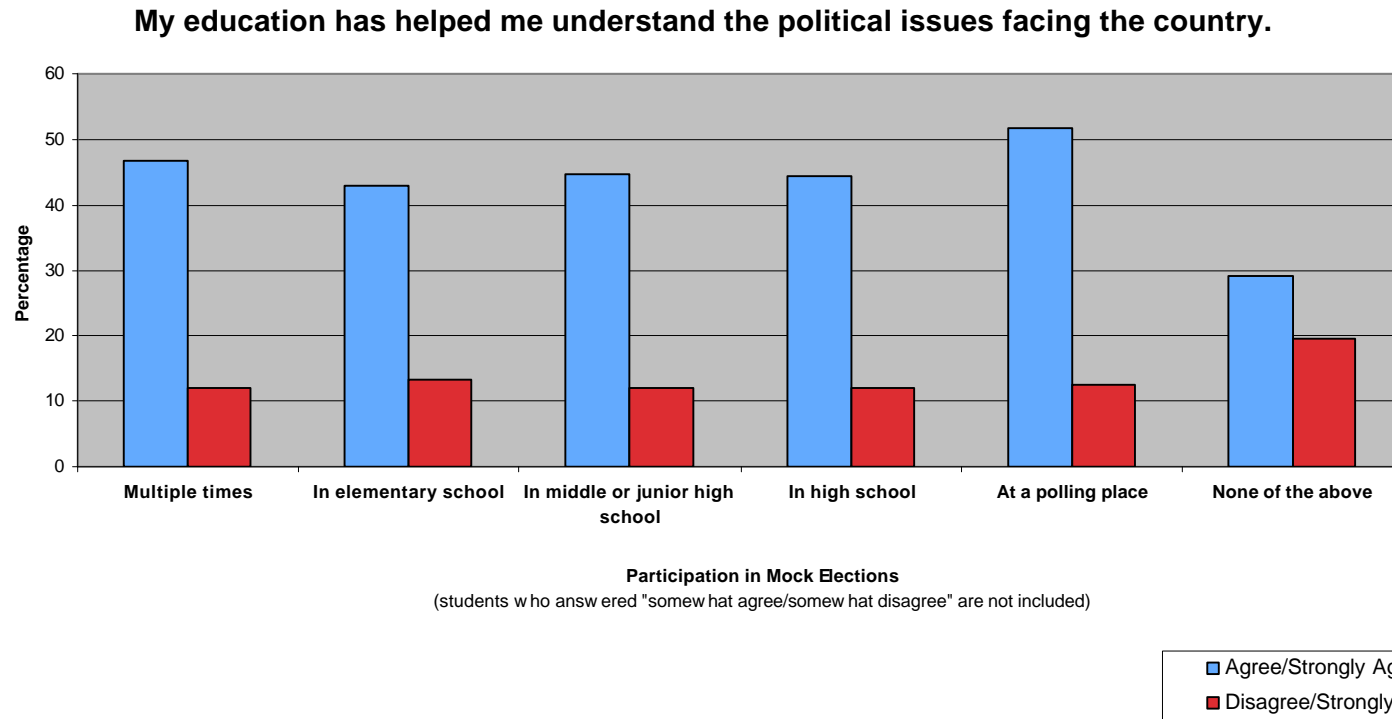
When political issues are discussed, I have something to say.



I am better informed about politics than most students.

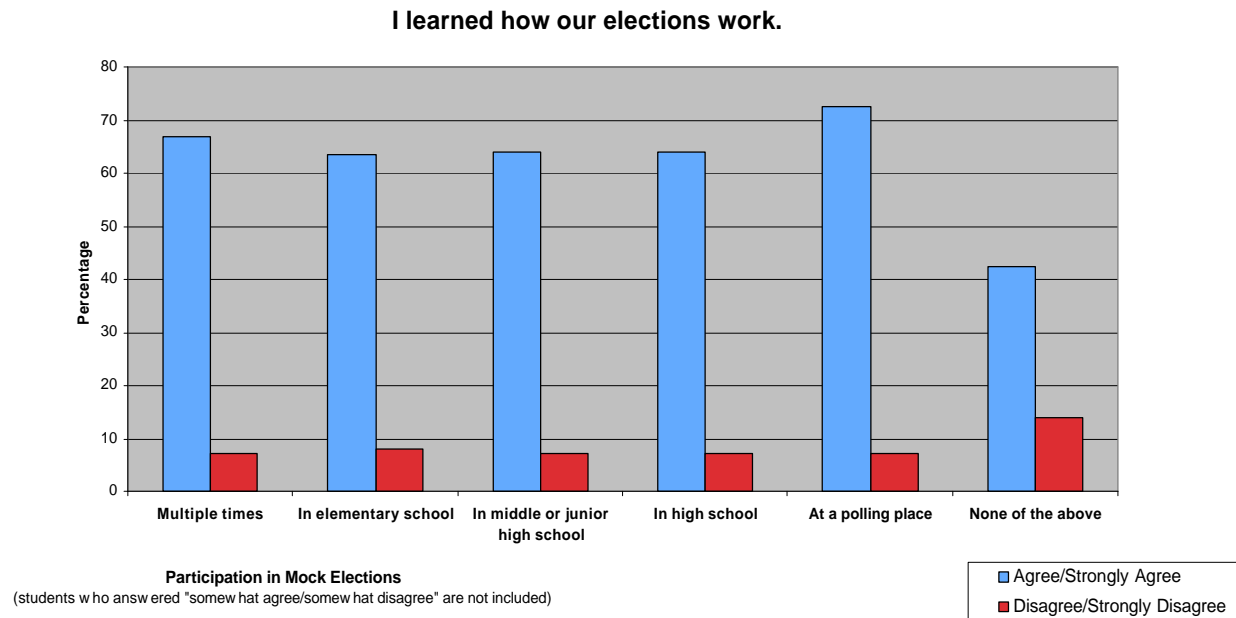


Students participating in a mock election agreed that their education made a difference in helping them understand the political issues facing the country.

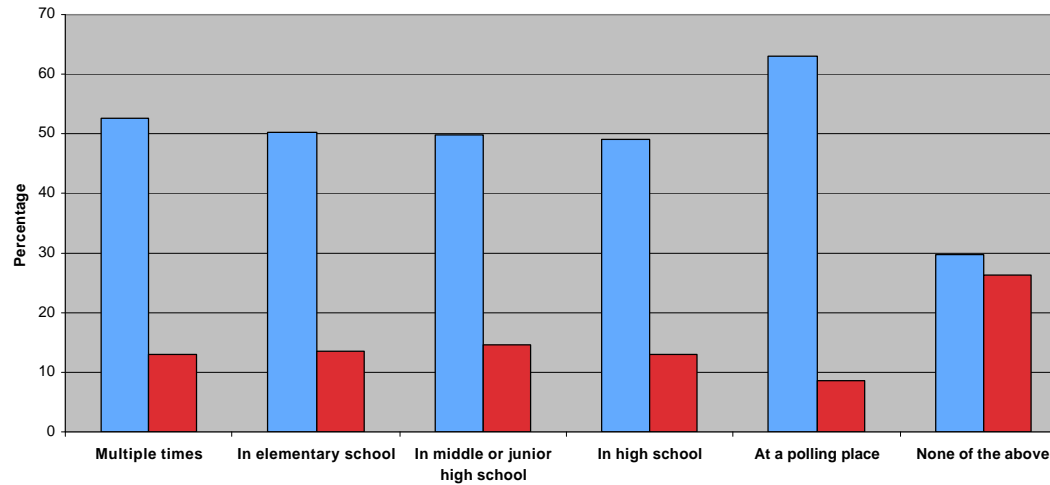


The VSAC survey suggested that participation in our mock elections programs also taught students some important civic information and skills. Students who participated in a mock election agreed that they:

- learned how our elections work.
- learned how to examine social problems.
- learned how to research candidates.
- learned ways of addressing community problems.
- learned how political action groups can solve problems.
- learned about individuals' responsibility to community.



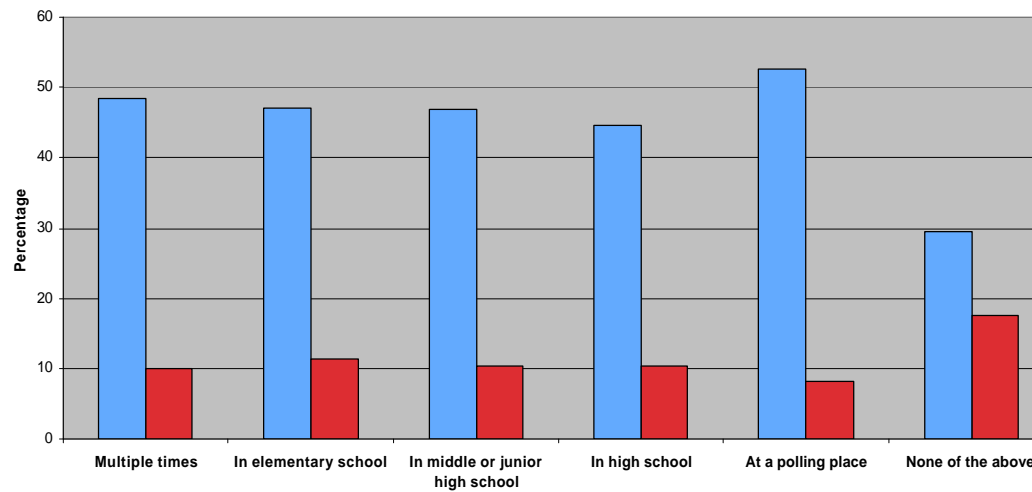
I know how to research candidates for political office.



Participated in Mock Elections
(students who answered "somewhat agree/somewhat disagree" are not included)

■ Agree/Strongly Agree
■ Disagree/Strongly Disagree

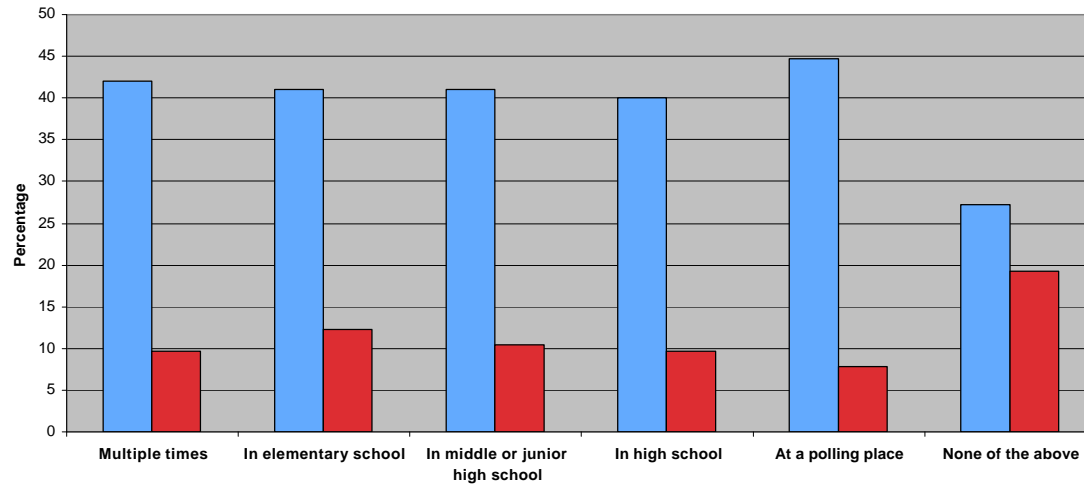
I learned how to examine social problems.



Participated in Mock Elections
(students who answered "somewhat agree/somewhat disagree" are not included)

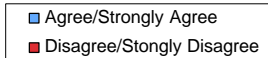
■ Agree/Strongly Agree
■ Disagree/Strongly Disagree

I learned ways of addressing community problems.

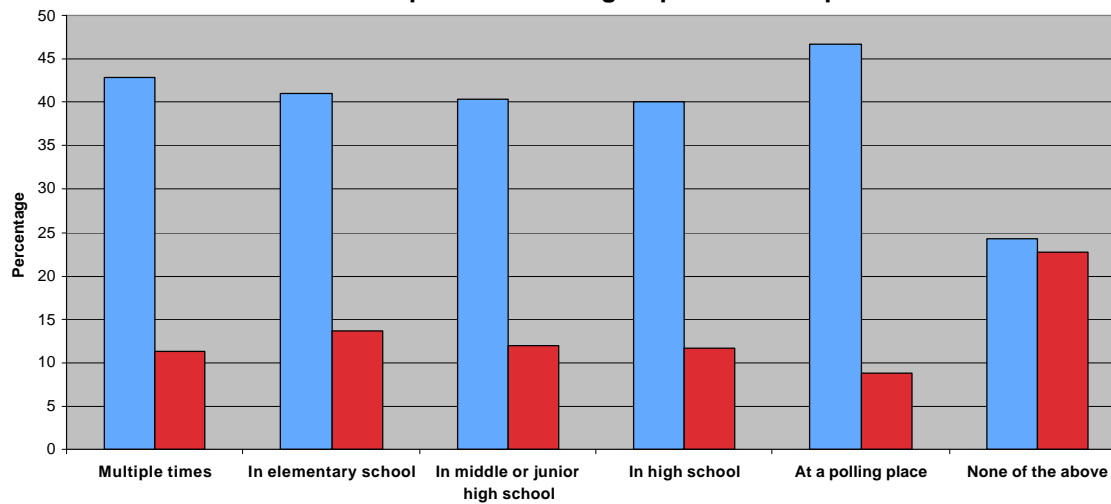


Participation in Mock Elections

(students who answered "somewhat agree/somewhat disagree" are not included)

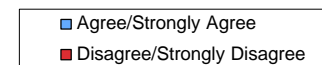


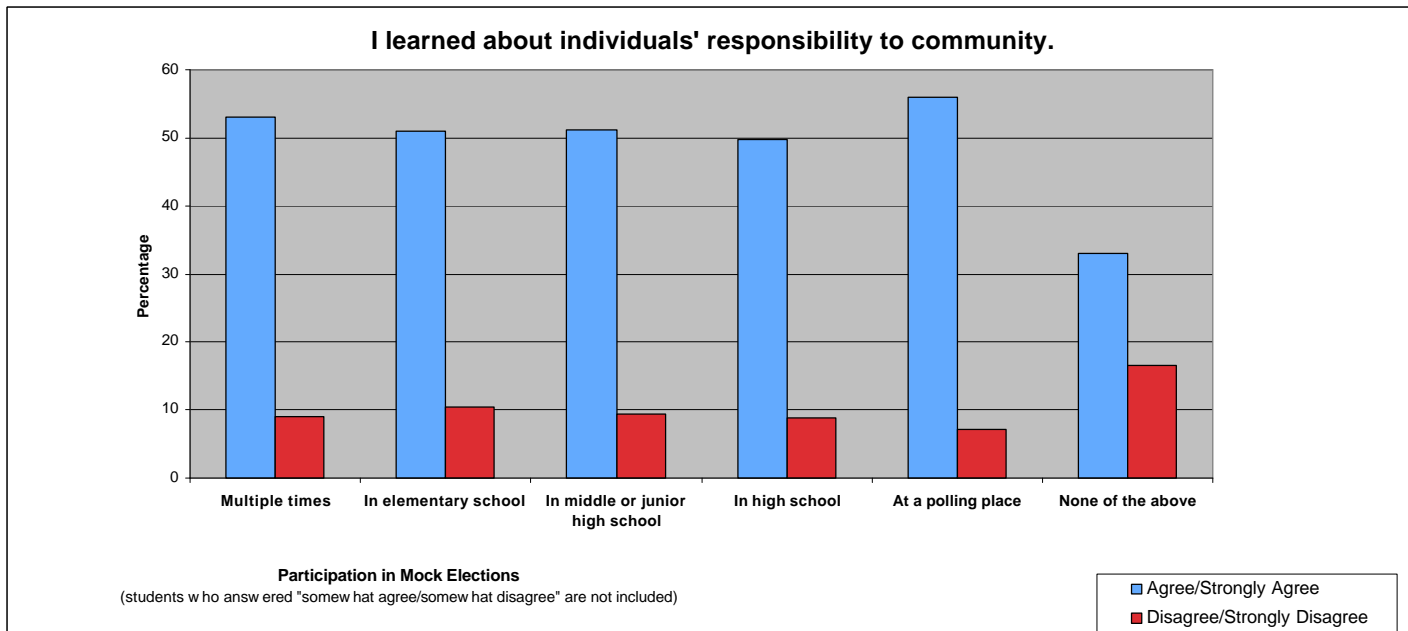
I learned how political action groups can solve problems.



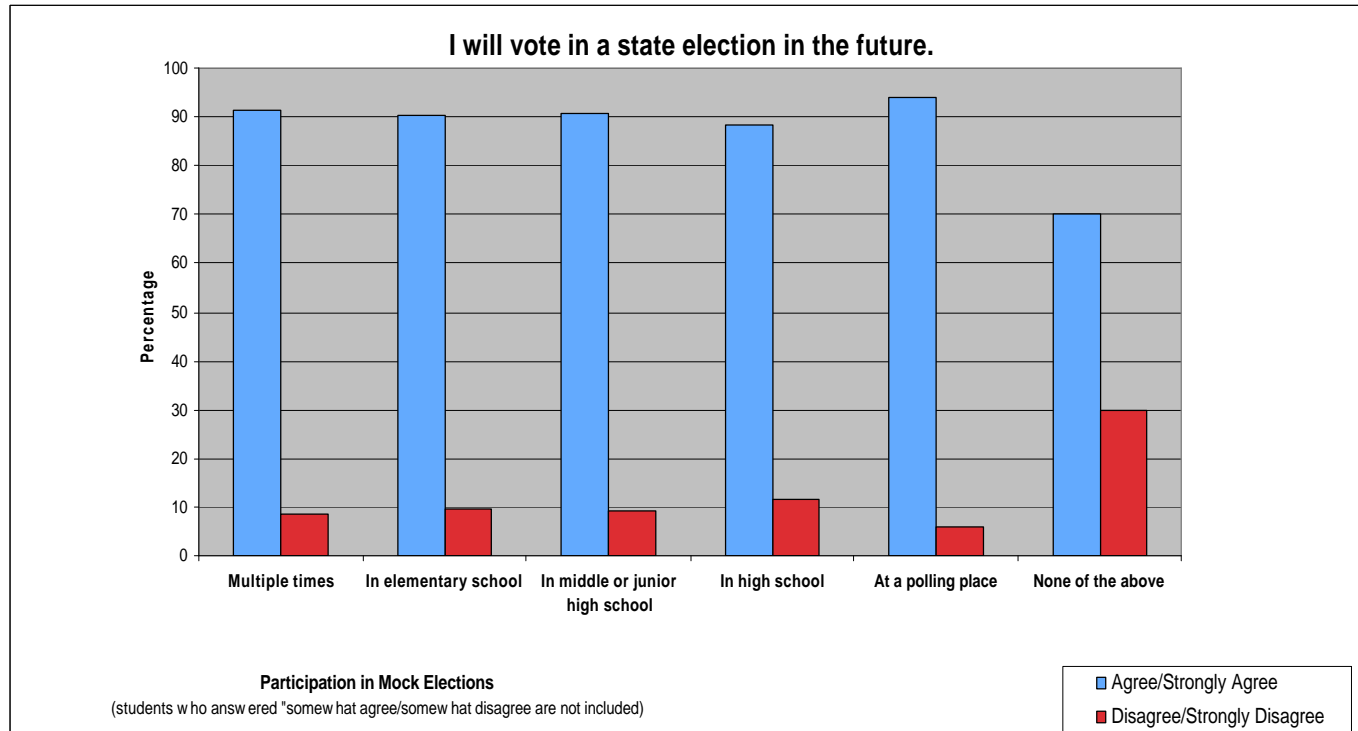
Participation in Mock Elections

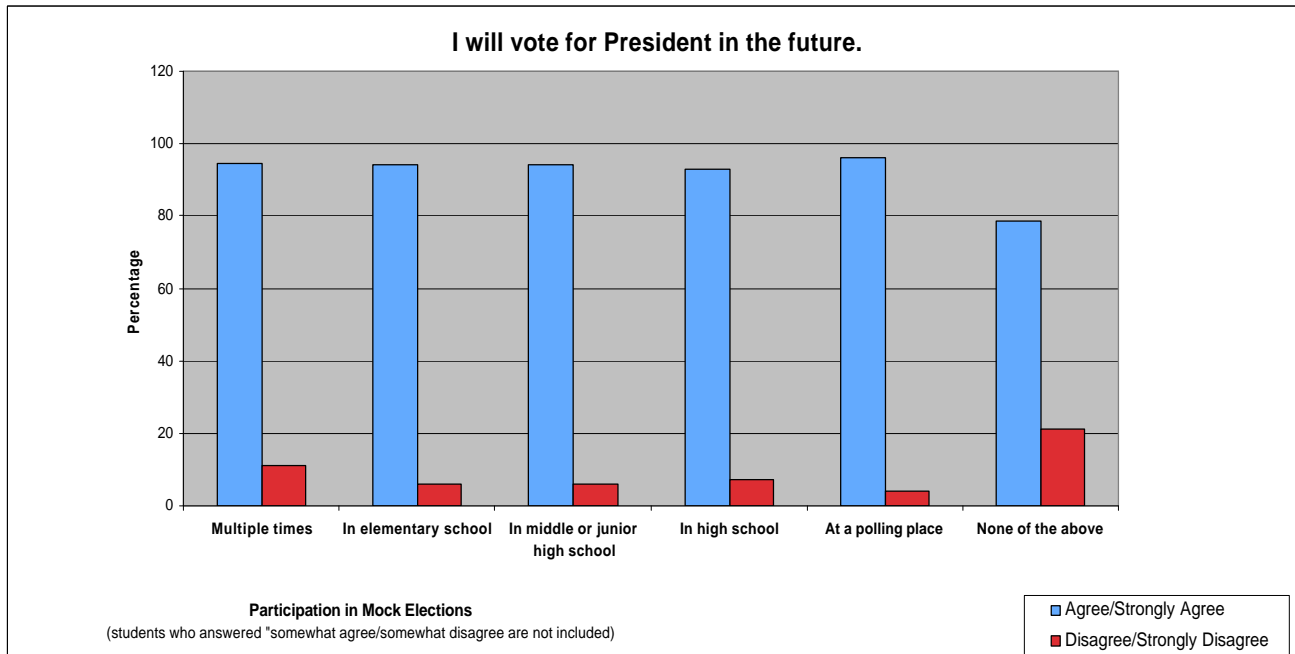
(students who answered somewhat agree/somewhat disagree are not included)



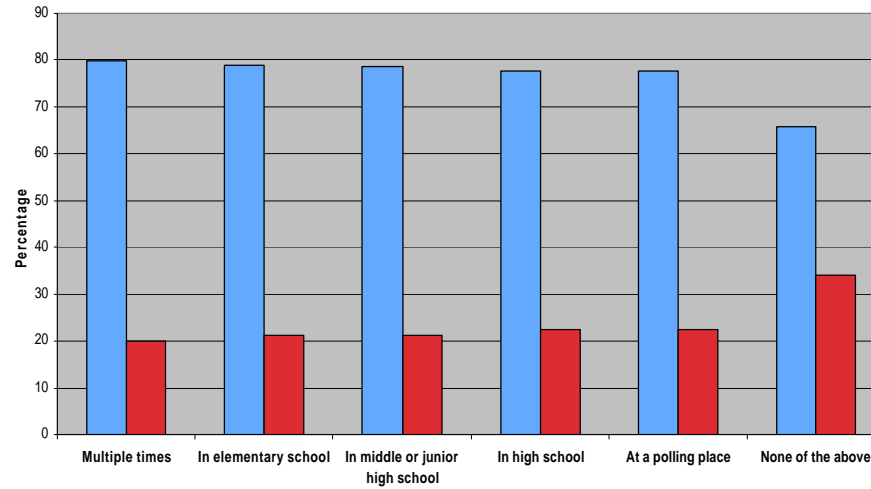


Students who participated in mock elections were more likely to report that they expected to be civically engaged adults.





I will volunteer in the community in the future.

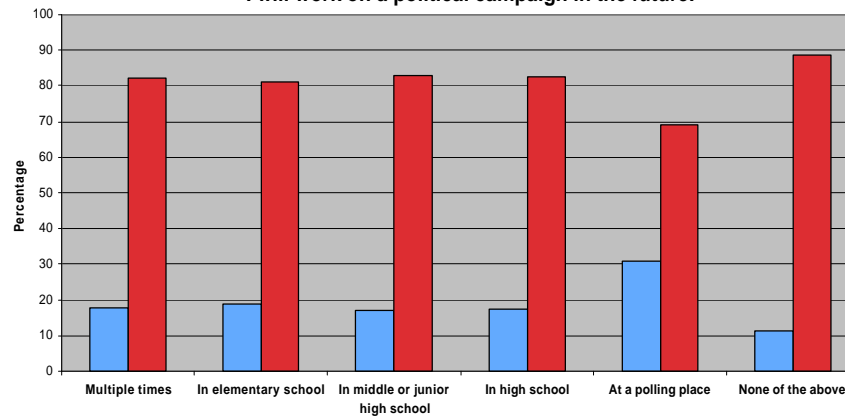


Participation in Mock Elections

(students who answered "somewhat agree/somewhat disagree" are not included)

■ Agree/Strongly Agree
■ Disagree/Strongly Disagree

I will work on a political campaign in the future.

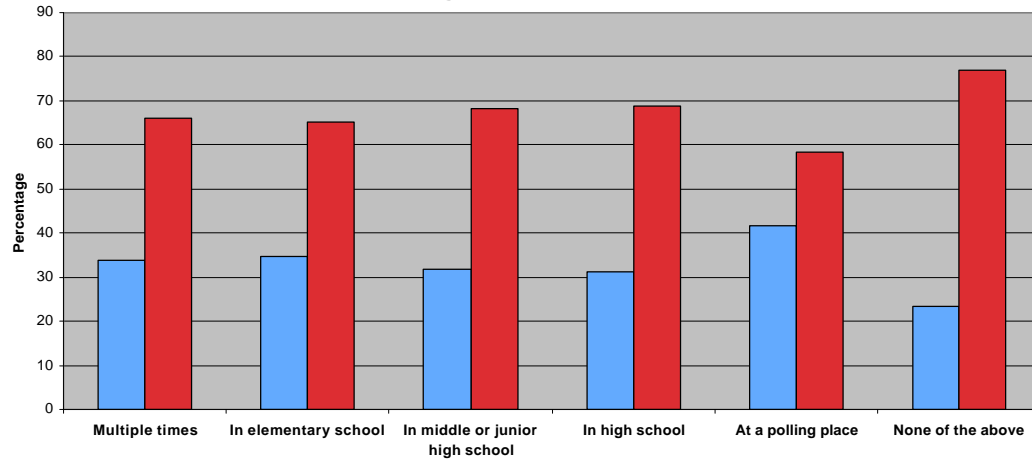


Participation in Mock Elections

(students who answered "somewhat agree/somewhat disagree" are not included)

■ Agree/Strongly Agree
■ Disagree/Strongly Disagree

I will collect signatures for a petition in the future.

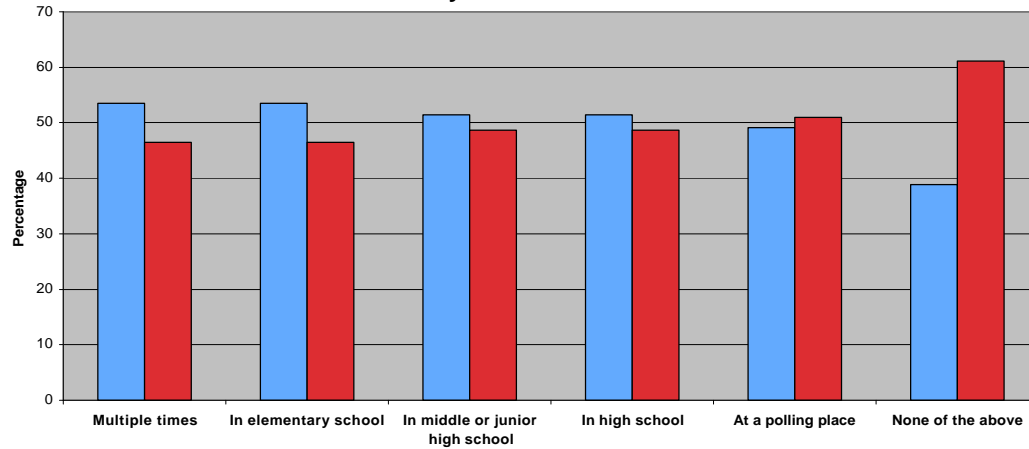


Participation in Mock Elections

(students who answered "somewhat agree/somewhat disagree" are not included)

■ Agree/Strongly Agree
■ Disagree/Strongly Disagree

I will collect money for a social cause in the future.

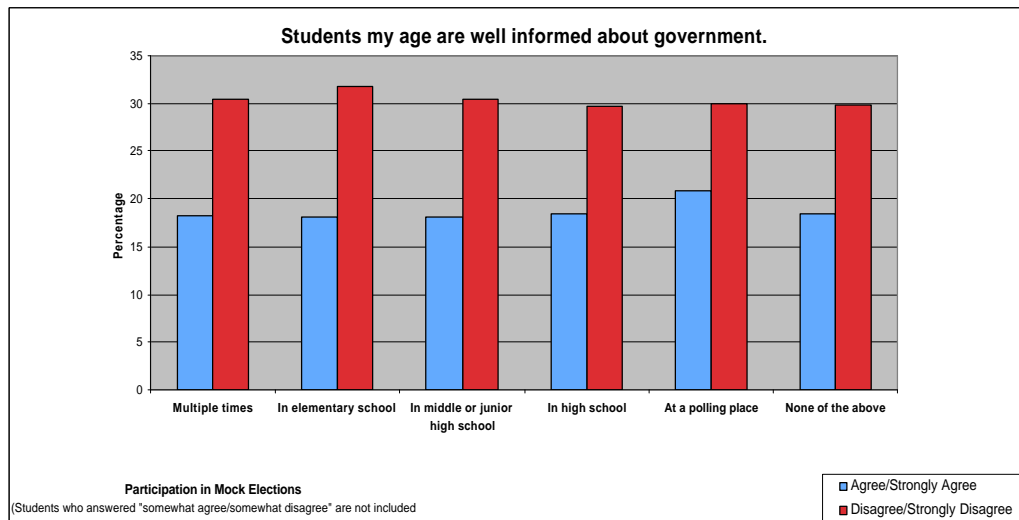
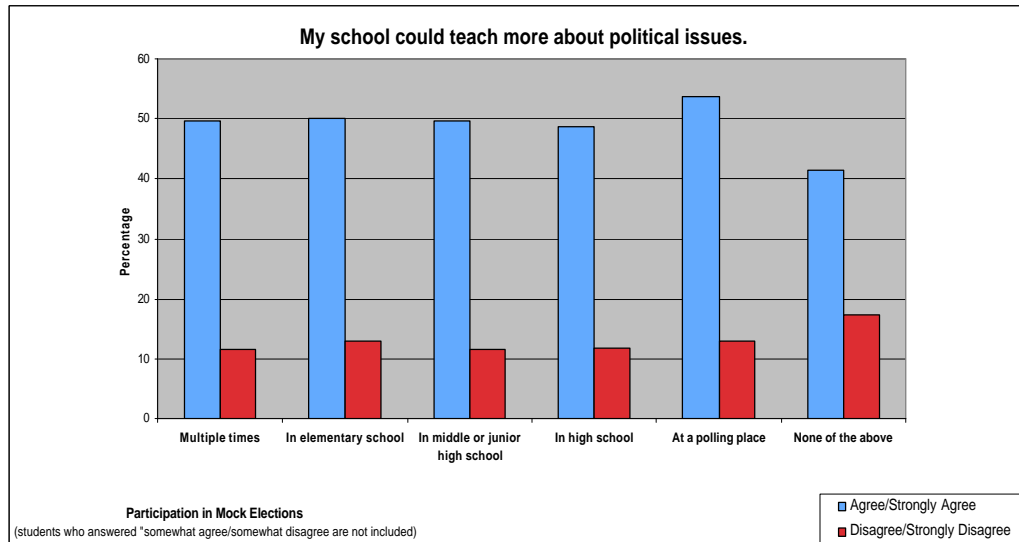


Participation in Mock Elections

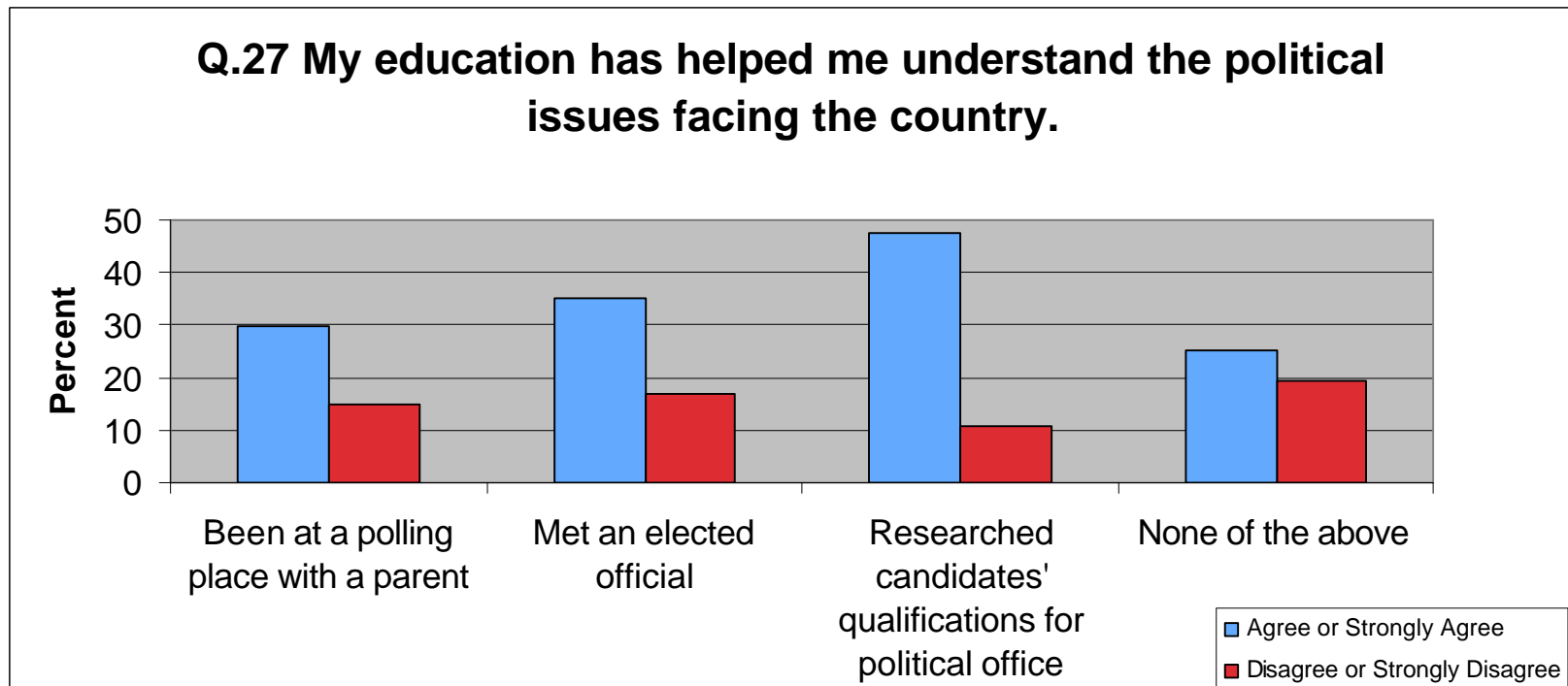
(students who answered "somewhat agree/somewhat disagree" are not included)

■ Agree/Strongly Agree
■ Disagree/Strongly Disagree

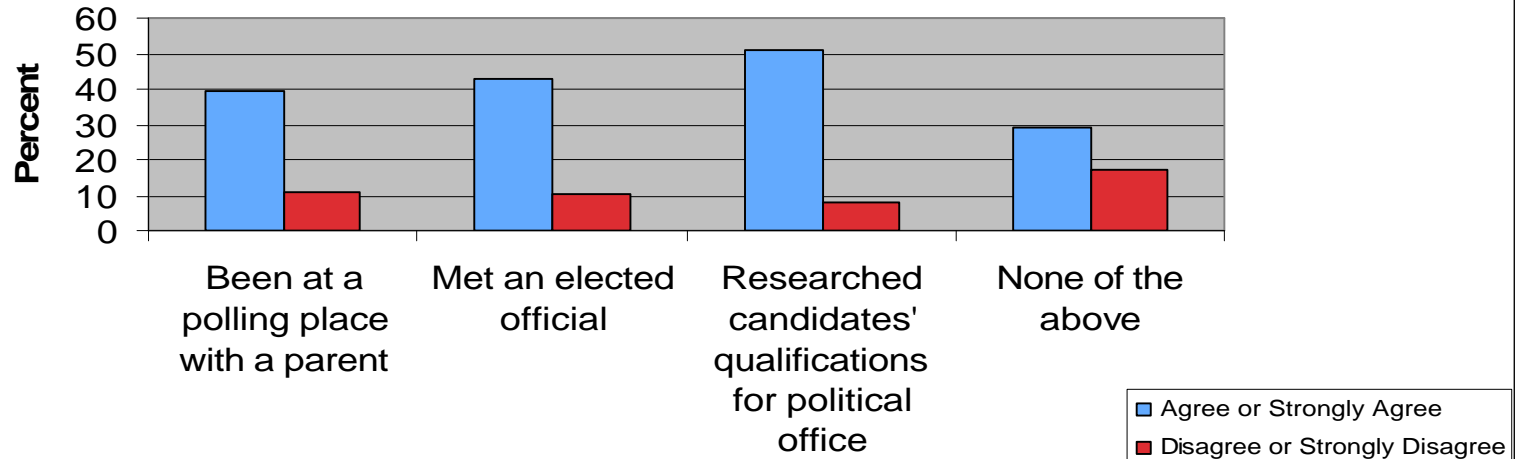
Despite these encouraging results most students agree that schools could be doing more.



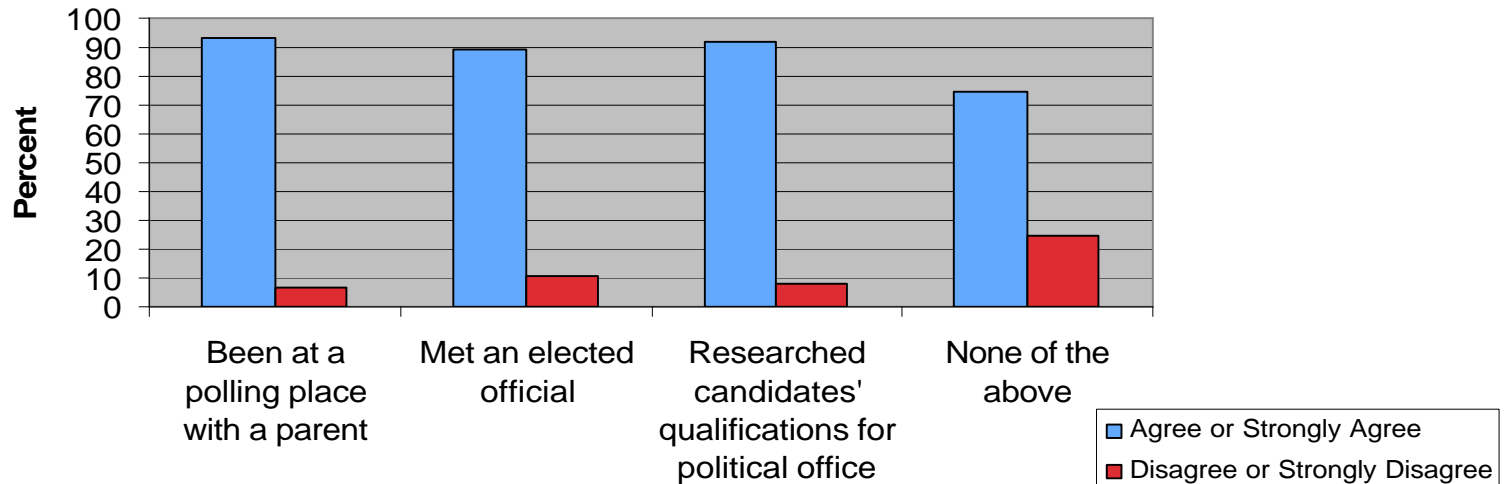
In addition to mock election programs, we found that meeting an elected official and/or going to a polling place with a parent will also result in heightened civic engagement.*



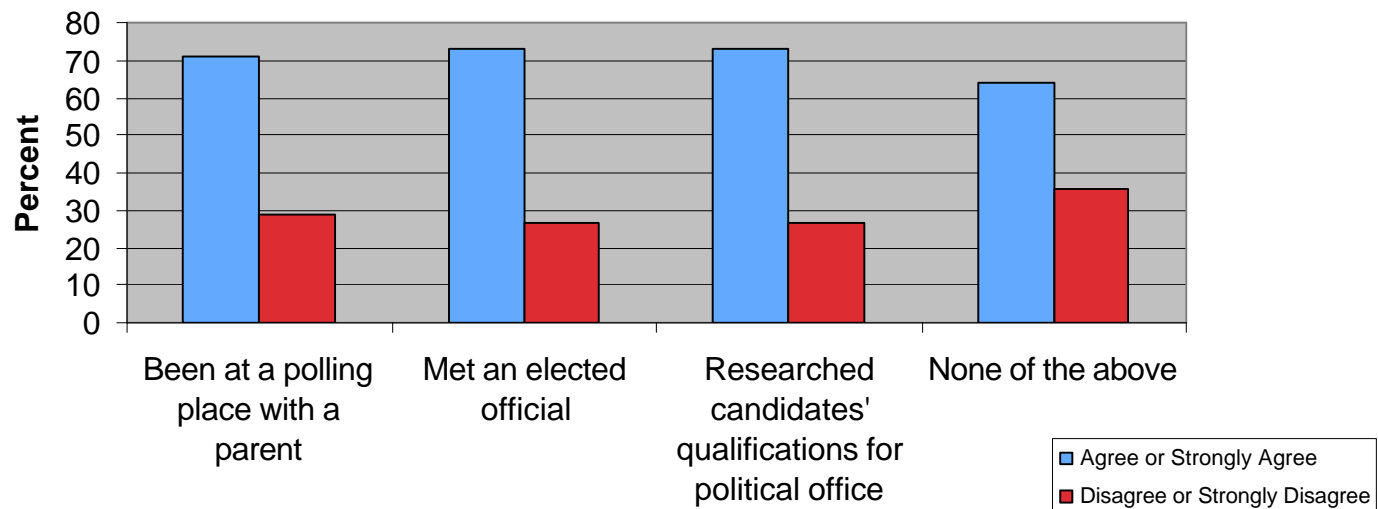
Q.36 I learned about individuals' responsibility to community



Q.38 I will vote for president in the future.



Q41. I will volunteer in the community in the future.



After a decade of recommitting our schools to teaching civics education we can see that our efforts have paid off. With this information in hand we need to act to ensure that, going forward, every Vermont student has an opportunity to learn the skills, values and behaviors necessary to be active, engaged citizens.

-Deb Markowitz, Secretary of State

*1998 New Millennium Project Survey of the National Association of Secretaries of State